

SHALL WOMEN VOTE?

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch:
Sir,—Friday, January 19, will go down in the history of Virginia as a most memorable day. On that day the State, pleading the cause before the committee of the government appointed for hearing such causes. Women who work for their own support and the support of others, women who pay taxes, women who train the minds of the youth of this State, women who in their professional life see the crying need of legislation which the law-governing body refuses to enact, women who have given the State her men—th as pleaded well that a larger opportunity to aid their State be given them. This is not a time for the men of the State, who boast of their chivalry and open-mindedness, to sneer at and ridicule the woman's movement; it is a time in which they should be devoutly thankful that the women of this State are unselfish enough, in the midst of multitudinous domestic and industrial duties, to offer their services to the State for her betterment.

"Taxation without representation"—the old cry rang out again. A part of the people taxed for the support of the government, and yet without a voice in electing the representatives who make the laws and distribute the funds of the State. Neither the members of the committee on whom was conferred the honor of hearing this cause, nor the people who were present to witness the proceedings, can deny the righteousness and justice of the woman's plea for the franchise. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, was presented. Hard fact fell upon hard fact. Mrs. Valentine, Miss Johnston, Mrs. Boshier, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Wise, Miss Davis, Miss Randolph produced the figures that cannot lie. Miss Johnston dealt in a concise way with the biological, philosophical and historical—as well as the practical—aspects of the cause. It is a great loss to the State that her men do not take to the profession in their political duties such thoughtful and intelligent sentiment as we were evident in Mrs. Valentine's masterful presentation of the rights of woman. It has been many a day since the walls of Virginia's House of Delegates have been so well reasoned and dignified presentation of a cause.

Two representatives of organized labor spoke earnestly for the granting of the franchise to women. Three ministers of the gospel, men endowed with strength and courage of conviction which lay beneath every word they uttered when he dealt with injustice, these men, refreshingly unafraid to carry the sign of their high calling into the political arena, came to testify to the value and righteousness of the woman's cause.

The day has come for the men who claim to be open-minded to justify their claim that the day has come for the men who boast their chivalry to perform the most noble act of chivalry—admit the defeat of their prejudices by the evidence that has been produced. Woman is not the mental, moral, physical weakling that the preconceived view of her brothers would seem to indicate, nor is she the divinity which their soft-spoken half-truths would lead the unknowing to think. Woman is human, and she is tired of the questionable position of parasite in which she is placed. She is tired of being treated as a plaything, of being a portion of self, home and government; supporters of the population to the humiliation of living on favors and privileges. Men say they love fair play; there is but one kind of fair play and that is granting people their rights.

It is contended that it is not right that woman should be subjected to the hardships of political life, the contaminating influence of politics, the uncertainty of the voting booth. Certainly no one will ever say again after last Friday that woman has not the intelligence required to cast a ballot. Does the average man who has at least spark of patriotism find it a hardship to cast his ballot or keep himself informed as to political situations? Why if the man in his crowded business life can find time to keep himself posted in political matters and to vote should not women do so? Is our Virginia home such an institution of slavery "to the daily round, the common task," as this argument would dictate? Why should the influence of politics be contaminating? Why should not political life be clean, or made clean, if it is so filthy? The political life is a part of the religious whole. Why should the voting booth be such an unclean place? It is there that a man performs as sacred a duty to his Creator as he does in the house of worship and petition. Why should not the voting booth be as clean as our churches and schools and as highly revered? This most sacred duty of political life should not be performed in a rum-befogged atmosphere or in the midst of profanity and crime, any more than that a man should think of making his private devotions in such an atmosphere. This argument argues a condition which is not quite good to admit: a failure of man to realize the greatness and sacredness of the franchise right. "Oh, but it is not right"

is considered the final argument. Then why has the question not only arisen in the evolution of God's world, but also triumphing? There are no disastrous results; this is sufficiently proved. The lack of any protest against the granting of the suffrage to woman was most marked in Friday's proceedings. There was not a voice raised openly and courageously against the hearing of the cause or the granting of the right. People convinced, really convinced, that a cause so well do not fight it by silence. God would forgive the conservatives for speaking out against it. The opponents of this cause should have challenged its evil leaders to debate and have branded them as evil-doers. There is a wrath that justifies strong action. Witness our Lord's driving the money changers from His Father's house.

Tradition, not justice and reason may withhold the proved right of suffrage from women now, but another generation is coming on to give the enfranchised a voice in the government to which they pay taxes and to whose laws they are subject.

The women are not alone in their fight; there are many men standing by their side—not behind them, pushing them on, but helping them as equals should be helped. These men reserve to themselves the sacred right of independent thought and action so long as these are harmful to no one. There are no promises of shielding and protection, for these women are not dependents; there is merely the promise to help and help to the end. It has cost some of these men as well as the women, the honored and cherished friendships and love of years; they have won sneers and jeers and even contumely, but if these things must be they must be.

We are grateful to the women for making this fight and unspcakably grateful to Miss Montague for her fearless conduct in presenting the joint resolution.

The light of a free day is breaking, and before so very long the women and men who honor and seek after justice and righteousness shall have equal weapons wherewith to wage their war.

WILLIAM CLAYTON TOIRENCE.
Richmond, January 20, 1912.

An Open Letter to Rev. Asbury Christ.

Sir,—I believe the work for equal suffrage to be a Christian work, and I try to do it because I am a Christian minister. I always enjoy reminding people that the first woman's rights convention in this country was held in a Methodist church.

So spoke Bishop J. W. Hamilton, of the Methodist Church.

"If Christianity is completely to restore that which was lost in Adam, how can it stop short of completely abolishing the subordination of woman, which the Bible declares to be the direct result of sin, and of leading us back to the Edenic proclamation, 'Let them have dominion over the earth'?"

These were the words spoken by Bishop J. B. Bashford, also of the Methodist Church.

I feel constrained to say, had you given the subject as unprejudiced and intelligent consideration as these two brothers of yours, there could be evoked nothing less than a most fervent American, in your sermon last Sunday morning.

Not only do we find our good Methodist brethren giving utterance to such opinions of equal suffrage, but a host of divines of all the leading denominations. Among them are the Revs. Newell Dwight Hillis, Robert Collyer, James Freeman Clarke, Francis E. Clarke, Minot J. Savage, Bishop Quaid and Spaulding, of the Roman Catholic Church, Bishop Samuel Fellows and Potter, Episcopal; and last, but not least, Kaibara, Stephen Wise and Charles Fletcher.

To those who are on the watch-tower of progress and alert to the signs of the times it is strikingly significant to note so many leaders of thought espousing the cause of woman suffrage. That other class of thinkers, the writers, are also conspicuous for their large numbers endorsing it. A petition presented to Congress in 1910 contained 710 names, besides 935, who had signed separate State petitions. The list was headed by Wm. Dean Howells, the dean of American literature, and contained the names of many men as well as women of note in the world of letters.

You say, "Woman's place is in the home." That worthy sentiment has been echoed so often that it provokes a smile, not the sentiment, but the reiteration of it, especially when given with that complacent air of originality that accompanies platitudes. Every woman is instinctively a home-maker and home-lover, but not every woman is afforded a suitable opportunity to establish and preside over a home; and the greatly changed industrial conditions have thrown many women who stay-at-home into the business world until in this country alone there is an army of 7,600,000 women workers, whose ranks are being steadily augmented.

This industrial era is making possible the physical, social, moral and intellectual

liberties of woman, but as yet in the necessarily slow process of this revolution woman is meeting with many containing the seeds of evil. Are not sweat shops and overwork and underpaid workers more destructive of the physical, mental and moral welfare of women than any condition in which suffrage might place her? Why make a virtue of necessity, the inevitable—woman's ability to longer remain in the home. Rather lift your voice against the evils so corruptive of health and motherhood—the foundation of the home. Why not follow the Golden Rule and give her the weapon of protection—that weapon for which our forefathers shed their blood, and which is to-day (whether every or not) so dear to the heart of every male citizen of the republic? How is it possible for you to deny it and believe in the doctrine which is affirmed in our Declaration of Independence, which is that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

When you and others of similar views say, "Woman's place is in the home and not at the polls," the inference is drawn that women will, if given the franchise, spend their entire time at the ballot box.

We could not do this, for the ballot box is only an extension of the office of a year. A prominent woman who had voted says that it takes her about eight minutes to do so, and she also states that she is often out of her home for very much longer periods of time than this, and for purposes far less important.

Does the act of voting cause men a business to suffer neglect? We never hear men advised not to vote, and that their business will suffer neglect if they do. That does not look as if an enfranchised woman must give up all claim to maintenance from her husband. And Miss Seawell may relieve her mind of the bogie of the poll tax; for in Colorado the voting woman is exempt from paying a poll tax. And since she does not have to ask her husband to pay her taxes, why should his basic principle does not cause any serious upheavals in Colorado. Where is there any deprivation of the rights of his sanity who will acquire a vote she is required to take her place with other voters in the manhood of the women of the United States.

Not only have women not lost any property rights in States where they suffrage, but they have gained from an economic point of view. In several different ways. Mrs. Maud Nathan, president of the Consumers' League of New York City, says in a address delivered before the Judiciary Committee of the New York Legislature: "In the States where women have the vote, work done by employees of the State, and in Colorado women hold responsible positions, political positions, and they are not deprived of their political position. In a neighboring village a man who wished to use it for political purposes. She had served faithfully, but that made no difference."

So far from having suffered from the enfranchisement of women, as Miss Seawell fears, minor children have been protected in several ways, by the direct influence of the woman's vote. The first State Legislature after women were granted suffrage passed a law making fathers and mothers the Guardians, with equal powers of the children. A new and more effective compulsory education law was passed in 1899 and made even more effective since by amendments. In addition, one of the school directors appointed by the school directors to enforce school attendance in all districts of the first or second class.

The Dener Juvenile Court needs no advertisement of its merits. It can give it. But it must be said that the vote of the enfranchised women of Colorado made it possible for Ben B. Lindsey, an independent candidate for Juvenile Court judge to triumph over the candidates of both the Republican and Democratic parties in the fall of 1909. Since then the given suffrage in Colorado has been beneficial to children have been passed by the direct influence of their vote. Among them a law establishing a bureau for dependent children, laws granting the children of the State Industrial School and the law giving the State Board of Charities and Corrections to investigate private charitable institutions.

The other "basic principle" advanced in the book in question is that "no education has ever existed, or ever can exist, without the aid of women." Miss Seawell thinks that a dozen ravens, the polls would prevent a hundred women from depositing a single ballot. There can be no doubt that the vote would be used by the rougher elements. Answering an assertion, Chief Justice Sullivan, of Idaho, must be able to fight his way to the polls, and after he has done so possess the physical ability to enforce the effect of the ballot in a proposition that would not stand the test in any civilized country. This so-called basic principle were correct, it would mean that at least one-fourth of the male voters in the State of Colorado must be able to enforce the effect of the ballot in a proposition that would not stand the test in any civilized country.

Continuing, in answer to the statement that women would meet with violence at the polls, the author says: "The thing has ever occurred in any of the suffrage States. What would the good men at the polling place do if the women were to be beaten and their ballots destroyed? Would they attempt to fight back? Would they attempt to fight back? Would they attempt to fight back?"

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